

TEACHING LITERACIES

*PEDAGOGIES AND
DIVERSITY*

IN THE MIDDLE YEARS

EDITED BY ROBYN HENDERSON ◀◀

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► Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>Contributors</i>	<i>xiv</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xvi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xviii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xix</i>
Part 1: Engaging Students through Pedagogies	1
1 Teaching Literacies: Principles and Practices	3
<i>Robyn Henderson</i>	
Introduction	4
Myths and realities of school literacy learning	6
Some principles and practices	9
Conclusion	13
Acknowledgements	14
2 Planning for Literacy Learning	18
<i>Robyn Henderson and Beryl Exley</i>	
Introduction	19
Teaching literacies in the middle years	20
Framing literacy learning	22
Using multiliteracies pedagogy	22
Using the four resources model	24
Planning for content learning and literacy learning	26
Macro planning	27
Micro planning	36
Using process drama	38
Focusing on overt instruction	45

Conclusion	50
Acknowledgements	51
3 Using Digital Texts to Engage Students	57
<i>Eileen Honan</i>	
Introduction	58
A sociocultural view of literacy	58
Changing views of reading and writing: Becoming <i>producers</i>	60
Creating intellectually challenging literacy tasks	62
The four resources model	63
Text participant resources	66
Code-breaking resources	69
Text using resources	72
Text analyst resources	74
Conclusion	77
4 Popular Culture in the Classroom: A Plethora of Possibilities	81
<i>Leanne Dalley-Trim</i>	
Introduction	82
What is popular culture?	83
Popular culture in the curriculum: A site of contest	84
The case for using popular culture in the middle years classroom	85
Magazines: Popular culture for tweens and teens	88
Content learning and literacy learning: Possibilities for using popular culture magazines	90
Assessment tasks	101
Conclusion	103
Part 2: Ensuring Literacy Learning for All Students	111
5 Teaching for Quality and Equity: (Re)Focusing the Lens to Make Diversity and Difference Visible	113
<i>Robyn Henderson and Annette Woods</i>	
Introduction	114
Positively diverse: Recruiting diversity in the middle years	115
Transitions across cultural spaces: Why is student diversity sometimes invisible?	117
(Re)focusing the lens for quality and equity	123
Refocus the lens	124
Use a wide lens	124
Consider multiple lenses	124
Avoid deficit discourses	125

Question assumptions about students and families	126
Identify students' strengths	126
Talk with students and their families whenever and wherever possible	127
Form real partnerships with students, their families and communities	127
Conclusion	128
Acknowledgements	129
6 Literacy Learning for Students in Rural Communities	132
<i>Pam Bartholomaeus</i>	
Introduction	133
Literacies for rural students	136
How we understand literacy	139
Thinking about literacies in the community, home and school	142
Understanding context: School and classroom	143
Place-based education	145
Learning activities	146
Local heroes and local history	146
Additional learning activities	154
Conclusion	158
7 Multimodal Literacies: New Approaches and Traditional Concerns in the Suburban Classroom	166
<i>Anne Cloonan</i>	
Introduction	167
Responding to change	167
Drawing on research	169
Designing pedagogies for engaged student literacy learning	171
Deepening knowledge of the multimodality of texts	176
Conclusion	187
8 What Could Socially-just Literacy Instruction Look Like?	190
<i>Annette Woods</i>	
Introduction	191
Two key concepts: Recognitive and redistributive justice	191
Social justice in Australian schools	192
Thinking about social justice in one school context	195
Considering socially-just literacy teaching	199
Literacy pedagogy, Or the role of providing an education	200
Citizenship, Or the role of building a civic society	202
Wellbeing, Or the role of providing a supportive environment and the right to equitable outcomes	203
Conclusion	204
Acknowledgements	206

9	An Holistic Approach for Supporting Written Literacy Skills for EAL/D Learners	208
	<i>Russell Cross</i>	
	Introduction	209
	The distinctiveness of additional language learners	210
	EAL/D in the mainstream?	213
	What does this mean for developing literacy?	215
	Learning an additional language	215
	A caveat	217
	Classroom application and strategies	218
	Listening and reading	218
	Speaking	220
	Writing: Bringing it all together	223
	Classroom activities	224
	Examining a student's writing	229
	Conclusion	231
10	Valuing Diversity: A Multiliteracies Project in a Remote Indigenous Community	236
	<i>Beryl Exley</i>	
	Diversity of learners	237
	Tortol Island and its diverse languages	238
	The middle years multiliteracies project	240
	Considering pedagogy	243
	Putting pedagogies into practice	248
	Conclusion	264
	Acknowledgements	266
11	Teaching Literacies: Pedagogical Possibilities	269
	<i>Robyn Henderson</i>	
	Introduction	270
	Reflecting on the preceding chapters	271
	Complexity	271
	Balance and flexibility	272
	Final thoughts and a model for reflection	275
	<i>Answers to Chapter 9 tutorial exercises</i>	279
	<i>Glossary</i>	281
	<i>Index</i>	289

► Contributors

Pam Bartholomaeus

Dr Pam Bartholomaeus is a Lecturer in literacy and rural education in the School of Education at Flinders University, South Australia. She teaches undergraduate and graduate-entry students in the middle and secondary school program, in literacy education, students and learning, and in preparing for the professional role of teacher. She also works with doctoral students researching questions related to place, including values and discourses related to place and seeking socially just outcomes for people with a close connection to their place. Her current research focuses on rural education, rural sustainability, theorising about place, place-based education, colonisation theory, and colonisation and literacy education.

Anne Cloonan

After working as a primary school teacher and with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Education Victoria, Dr Anne Cloonan now lectures at Deakin University in language and literacy education. Her research addresses teacher and student learning as they intersect with emerging technologies and language and literacy education, an area of increasing centrality. Her work explores the complexities of literacy education in transition and the opportunities and limitations of new technologies. Anne works with teachers to promote deep and coordinated teaching and learning of multimodal texts and multimodal literacies and transformed views of what it means to be literate.

Russell Cross

Dr Russell Cross is a Lecturer in second language education at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne, and coordinator of its newly developed Master of Education (Content and Language Integrated Learning) program. His background is in bilingual education and immersion, with his research focusing on the social, cultural, historical, and political nature of the knowledge base that informs second language teacher education. He is former co-editor of *TESOL in Context*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Australian Association of TESOL Associations, and his work appears in leading international journals in language, education, and policy, including *Language Problems and Language Planning*, *Language and Education*, and *Modern Language Journal*.

Leanne Dalley-Trim

Leanne Dalley-Trim is an Associate Professor at the School of Education, James Cook University, Townsville. She teaches undergraduate education students who are specialising in early childhood, primary, middle and secondary education, along with postgraduate students. More specifically, she teaches in the areas of language and literacies education and secondary school English curriculum. In addition to these areas, she researches and publishes in the fields of gender and education, Indigenous education, youth culture, and rurality. She previously worked as a teacher and Head of Department (English) in secondary schools in Queensland.

Beryl Exley

Dr Beryl Exley is an experienced classroom teacher who is now a Senior Lecturer in Cultural and Language Studies at the Queensland University of Technology. Beryl adopts a socio-cultural approach to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Her collaborations with some very inspiring teachers have resulted in the publication of over 40 journal articles, conference papers and book chapters. Her special interest is in the unlikely topic of grammar, as well as the teaching of reading, writing, listening and speaking in multimodal environments. Since 2005, Beryl has been an elected representative on the National Council of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association.

Robyn Henderson

Robyn Henderson is an Associate Professor (Literacies Education) in the Faculty of Education at the Toowoomba campus of the University of Southern Queensland. She teaches both undergraduate and postgraduate students in courses about literacy curriculum and pedagogies, and she is the doctoral programs coordinator. Robyn researches in the field of literacies. She is particularly interested in the education of mobile school students and in finding ways that education systems might better cater for students with mobile lifestyles, especially in relation to the learning of literacies.

Eileen Honan

Dr Eileen Honan is Senior Lecturer in English and Literacy Education at The University of Queensland. She researches the relationship between literacy and learning practices at home and school in a variety of contexts, including Australia and Papua New Guinea. Eileen is also interested in the use of critical reflection processes as part of professional learning for teachers in diverse contexts.

Annette Woods

Dr Annette Woods works in the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology. She teaches and researches in the areas of literacy, curriculum and pedagogy, and social justice. Her current research projects include an investigation into teachers' use of official curriculum documents, a study of literacy reform in low SES and culturally diverse schools, and issues related to assessment in the early years. She is also part of the core research team engaged in the evaluation of a large scale leadership reform program that aims to improve outcomes for Indigenous students in Australia.

► Preface

This book focuses on literacy education in the middle years, the years that span primary and secondary schools. This specific focus came from the long term interests of the contributing authors and their passion for literacies, for teaching, for working with students and teachers in schools, and for working with pre-service teachers in universities.

The middle years of schooling cater for students who have variously been called adolescents, young adolescents, early adolescents, youths, young people, teenagers, teens and tweens. This age group is often described as ‘troubling,’ ‘crazed with hormones,’ or ‘delinquents, deficiencies, or clowns’ (Lesko, 2001, p. 1). In fact, you may have noticed that the media, in particular, seem adept at telling stories that demonise young people (Bahr, 2010) and showing them as nuisances to society. This is evident in news headlines, such as ‘Teen girls “spit and punch” mother and daughter at Southbank’ (Munro O’Brien, 2011), ‘Teens questioned over swan killing’ (Flower & McGee, 2011), and ‘Teen in court over series of random violent attacks in CBD’ (Ross, 2011).

The media often tell deficit stories about literacy education and about literacy educators. It is not unusual to hear that literacy standards are falling and that this is the result of young people’s deficiencies, problems with the education system, poor teaching, or inadequate teacher education provided by universities. The following media headlines indicate the types of stories that seem to be told on a regular basis: ‘Australian teens’ skills falling in maths, literacy’ (Dillon, 2010), ‘Australia “falling behind” on Indigenous literacy’ (McDonald, 2011), ‘Opposition targets “shocking” rural literacy’ (Patty, 2011).

If we believed all of the gloom and doom stories about young people and about literacy education, then we would probably come to the conclusion that teaching in the middle years was an experience akin to being *Stuck in the middle with you*¹—not an experience that we’d really want to have. However, this is not a view taken by the authors of this book. None of the authors subscribe to negative or deficit views. Rather, they take a positive perspective, focusing squarely on classrooms as places where literacy learning occurs.

This book, therefore, sets out to offer productive and transformative ideas for literacy education in the middle years and to ensure that the learning of literacies is relevant and engaging for all students. The authors recognise that there is considerable public scrutiny of literacy education and increasing pressure on teachers to deliver better student results on mandated tests and measures. However, rather than becoming embroiled in the debates or getting caught up in what Rasinski and Fawcett called ‘accountability by acronym’

(2008, p. 1), they have focused on classroom practices and how the work of teachers might make a difference to student learning. In particular, the book highlights the authors' interests in making sense of student diversity and ensuring that literacy education caters for all students.

Notes

ⁱ Thank you to my colleague Brad McLennan who reminded me of the Stealers Wheel song, *Stuck in the middle with you*, and the possibilities for playing with the word *middle*.

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